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so they say, nine generations ago. One of the first settlers was one Lokhon Mañjhi. Just before he died he had been paying a visit to the *boiga than*, probably the sacred grove of that day. It occupied a site that is now taken by the landlord's rent-collecting office and has quite disappeared. He returned home, sat down on his string bed to have a smoke, then suddenly fell over and died. Almost immediately, and before the news of Lokhon's death had passed through the village, a young man in the courtyard of a house belonging to Lokhon's paternal aunt became possessed. He announced to the assembled company that he was Lokhon and that they must make a sacred place for him. They chose an old banyan tree to the north of the village. This tree has long since disappeared, but its place has been taken by an *atnak'* tree, which serves equally well. The fact that the village has become largely non-Santal means that the sanctity of this particular shrine is recognized by people belonging to many different castes, and its reputation has grown with the years. All the offerings there are made by the Santal priest in the village, a man who is descended from Lokhon. He is also the local Santal headman and combines the two offices in one person; such an arrangement is not unique and seems to have been adopted often in places where the Santals are living surrounded by other communities. He and his predecessors have adapted themselves to the new situation, and so this shrine, now utilized by many non-Santals, is still served by a Santal priest. Every market day people from the surrounding villages come to offer sacrifices, to ask a boon, or to leave their thank-offerings of money for blessings that have been granted. Some of the more unscrupulous of the local inhabitants defy the spirits by hanging around and picking up the coins left by the devout.

At the base of the tree is the shrine, formed by a raised earthen mound on which there are many burnt clay effigies of horses and elephants. In front of the mound a narrow path has been cleared for about eight feet, so that the tree is approached from the west, the direction in which all the effigies are facing. This path has been cleared through a jumbled heap of innumerable small clay animal effigies that have been left at the shrine by devotees in the past in the performance of their vows. Here there were many opportunities for watching the priest at work, and the chief impression that stands out is the dignity and reverence with which he performed his tasks. On a particular Thursday in 1941 he first of all cleared a small space at

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the base of the earthen mound and smeared it with his mixture of cowdung and water. He then took some vermilion paint from a leaf and mixed it with mustard oil in a small brass cup that he had brought for the purpose. This mixture he proceeded to smear on the foreheads of the larger animal effigies, and in doing so he used only the middle finger of his right hand. He then sprinkled some water over the effigies, and followed this by sprinkling some spice, of a variety known as *mithu*.[1] Up to this point all his actions had been performed in complete silence, and he was being watched intently by a small group of people who were waiting to make their offerings. He used the utmost deliberation and completed each part of the proceeding with great reverence. He next took up in his right hand a twig of the *sinjo*[2] tree and passed it in an anti-clockwise direction over the space that had been smeared with cowdung and laid it at the foot of the mound. Then he did an obeisance, bringing his right hand up to his forehead with the fingers lightly clenched, while the fingers of his left hand rested against his right forearm, the customary Santal salutation by an adult to his respected seniors. The process was repeated three times with three separate twigs, and as each twig was moved around he muttered his prayer. When it was over he told me that one had been for *Cando*, one for *Marak Buru*, and one for Lokhon Mañjhi.

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All was then ready for the offerings, of which on that particular day there were three. The first was a pigeon that had been brought by the mother of a sick child. He accepted it from the mother, taking hold of it by his right hand and taking care—he was squatting on the ground—not to turn his back on the shrine. He smeared the head of the pigeon with vermilion and oil, sprinkled it with some of the *mithu*, and then held it to feed on a little parched rice that he had placed on a leaf on the smeared space. He then handed the pigeon back to the woman who had brought it. The same process was repeated with a black hen and a small black goat that belonged to others who had been waiting. As each of them took back the dedicated animals they paid a small money fee to the priest, this varying from one to four pice. He then placed his sacrificial axe on the ground to his left with the sharp edge uppermost. This axe, known as the *tangi*, has a curved blade. He took hold of the pigeon once more and severed its head by passing it swiftly

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[1] *Trigonella Foenum-graecum*, Willd.
[2] The Bengali *Bel*, Aegle Marmelos, *Correa*.

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so, they are able to determine the sex of subsequent children according to the place at which the cord is cut. 844

Special measures have to be taken when delivery proves to be difficult. An *ojha* is called in if he lives at hand. He may resort to consulting the omens with leaf and oil, but if matters do not appear to be so serious he proceeds at once to prescribe treatment. One of his methods is to take a square of bark from a plantain tree in his right hand and to prick it repeatedly with a needle held in his left hand. Or a dagger is held upright over a brass drinking vessel and water is poured down the blade of the dagger, this water afterwards being given to the mother to drink. Another method is to tie a root to the mother's hair. It is important that the strand of hair to which the root is tied should be cut off as soon as the birth has taken place, lest she should lose her entrails as well. No men are admitted to the room where the birth is taking place, and the husband has to remain at hand in the courtyard. When the delivery is difficult he comes in for some chaffing or abuse according to the degree of difficulty. Some action of his at the time when conception occurred is held to be responsible. One of his duties is to keep by him the materials for lighting a fire in the room after the child is born. No fire is kept lit during the process of birth, but the fire lit immediately afterwards is used for providing a dry-heat massage for his wife's abdomen and for massage of the infant. As soon as the child is born, the women cry out the news to the husband and any others in the courtyard, and the former takes a large stick with which he repeatedly beats the roof, crying out loudly at the same time to drive away any lurking ghosts. As soon as the floor has been cleaned and the mother is resting, the husband is admitted into the room. He then digs a hole in the floor with a ploughshare and in it he buries the afterbirth. It must not be buried directly beneath a rafter. The Santal does not talk of his "birthplace"; he refers to it as "the village where my afterbirth was buried". 845 [593] [372] 844

One of the ceremonies that take place on the day that the child is born appears to relate chiefly to the wellbeing of the mother. She and the midwife sit facing each other on the floor of the house. The mother fills a leaf cup with distilled liquor and passes the cup to the midwife, who throws away its contents on her left side; this is repeated three times. The ceremony is known as *met' halaŋ*, or "lifting the eye", and no Santal has been able to offer me an explanation of the custom. It may be ascribed to the necessity for taking precautions against the evil eye. 844 788